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ABSTRACT

An assessment of the Newark Literacy Campaign's (NLC's) Adult Tutorial Reading Program studied 20 long-term (in the program for at least 1 year) and 20 new adult learners; all but 2 were African-Americans. The following data sources were used: in-depth interviews with learners, logs completed by tutors, follow-up interviews 6-8 months later, intake/assessment records, tutor questionnaire, direct observation, NLC staff interviews, and test results. Case study material illustrated answers to the research questions relating to NLC's effects on learners' lives, how new learners gain reading skills, why new learners decide to continue or leave the program, second-generation effects, and assessment instruments. Themes that emerged included the following: (1) early family and schooling experiences influenced the role of literacy learner; (2) these learners exhibited atypical characteristics such as independence and rejection of the negative values and behaviors of the urban "underclass"; (3) tutor turnover was a major factor in stopping out and dropping out; and (4) learners with multiple roles demonstrated a wider range of application of their improved literacy skills. Conclusions and recommendations were as follows: (1) NLC has an impressive retention rate--75% of long-term and 71% of new learners; (2) NLC's organizational climate is characterized by openness, warmth, caring, dedication, and industry, and it has accomplished much under severe financial constraints; (3) volunteer tutor support and training are essential; (4) counseling and referral services should be provided; (5) women learners, often burdened by family responsibilities, should be paired with women tutors; and (6) NLC should allow more frequent attendance for learners who wish to progress more rapidly. (Appendixes include the following: information on data collection and analysis, guide to using learner genograms, and tutor, learner, and program leaver questionnaires and interview guides.) (Contains 24 references.) (YLB)

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ANALYSIS AND ASSESSMENT OF THE NEWARK LITERACY CAMPAIGN'S ADULT TUTORIAL READING PROGRAM: A REPORT TO THE FORD FOUNDATION

by

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To the adult literacy learners who so greatly helped and inspired us

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We wish to thank the staff of the Newark Literacy Campaign, especially its Executive Director, Linda Deusinger, for ungrudging support and assistance in bringing the Project to fruition. Likewise, we could not have done without the generous assistance of Rutgers doctoral students during the most intensive phase of data analysis: thank you, Linda Milstein, Neil Orkin, Eileen Quaglino, and Hank Schwartz. To the late Terry Armstrong, a member of the Rutgers group who died unexpectedly this June, we acknowledge in sorrow the keen insights we gained from him.

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PROLOGUE

The Program & Sample

The Newark Literacy Campaign, Inc. is a non-profit community-based organization founded in 1984 with the goal of combatting the city's severe illiteracy problem. It is widely known and well regarded in Newark and its environs. NLC operates programs for children and teenagers, and a family literacy initiative. All, like the adult literacy program, rely on volunteer tutors.

The adult literacy program operates at three sites, each with a volunteer site coordinator. The main site is the 20' x 20' room that serves as the NLC's headquarters off the third floor of Newark's neo-Grecian public library. At the back of the room are two secretarial stations blocked-off by bookshelves and file cabinets, and at the front left is a small coffee corner. The rest of the room is crammed with tables and chairs for the tutors and learners. Another site is an office building across the street from the library, where two large training rooms are borrowed in the evening hours. The third site is the headquarters of a cooperating community agency some distance from the downtown library area. Learners meet with their tutors once a week for two hours: from noon to 2 p.m. or 7 to 9 p.m. At each of the three sites an experienced tutor serves as a volunteer site coordinator --a crucial link between the learners and tutors and the paid staff. All sites are closed on Friday evenings and

weekends.

NLC's paid staff include an executive director, a tutor coordinator, and two clerk typists. The tutor coordinator is an African-American as are some 80 percent of the tutors, nearly all of whom are college-educated. Adult students are recruited primarily through referrals from public social service agencies, employers, and numerous community groups and organizations, as well as by word of mouth, promotional materials, and current and former students. The NLC is supported by grants from the Newark business community and local philanthropies.

NLC's social climate reflects its informal physical setting. In some ways, NLC is like a big family of tutors and learners who go about their work in the seeming absence of organizational structures. Of course, the structures are there -- visible, for example, in the four-week, 15-hour tutor training sessions based on the methods of Literacy Volunteers of America, in one-on-one training in whole language reading methods, and in periodic group meetings and recognition ceremonies.

The metaphor of the large family captures the look and feel of NLC, but stands in contrast to a more fundamental dynamic of limited social interaction and group cohesion except among those tutors and learners who meet at the same site at the same time. More than anything else, it is the tutor-learner dyad that

constitutes the essence of NLC as an enterprise of adult literacy education.

The Adult Learners. Of the 82 learners enrolled at the start of data collection in May, 1991, two groups were selected for the study: all who had been in the program for at least one year, whom we call **long-term learners**, and all who enrolled in the program in the spring of 1991, the group we call **new learners**.

By chance, each group comprised 20 learners. The other 42, who had not just started but who had been in the program for less than a year, were excluded from the study. All 40 learners, except for two Hispanic men, were African-Americans. They ranged in age from 22 to 65 (only two were over 55), with most in their thirties and forties. Of the 38 African-Americans, 15 were born and raised in the South (nearly all in the Carolinas and Georgia), 8 in the Caribbean or West Indies, 3 in West Africa, and 12 in Newark. Twenty-two were women and 18 men. The data reported here, therefore, are grounded in the experiences of **African-Americans** born in various places but now living in Newark.

Chapter One

INTRODUCTION & OVERVIEW

Knowing our own predilections, we suspect that when most of us pick up a report such as this the first section we read is the **Conclusions and Recommendations.** However, we believe that the description of the study's purposes and methods, which is usually the last section most of us read, should actually be the first. We decided, therefore, to begin this report by stating the research questions in the Newark Literacy Campaign's proposal to the Ford Foundation and then presenting a brief case study.

The purpose of the case material is to orient readers to some of the information we sought and the methods and data sources we employed in order to secure that information. Moreover, the discussion following the Wes Darby case makes note of findings that we support and interpret more fully in later chapters. It is important to keep in mind that our sample is comprised of 40 people, all of them very distinct individuals. Thus, Wes Darby's case by no means tells the complete story, although in many ways it is representative. Finally, details of the study's design and methods can be found in the methodological appendices.

Research Questions

[1] Has the NLC changed the lives of learners who have been in the program for more than one year? If so, what are these learners' new and tangible abilities in their daily lives?

[2] Do learners new to the program (in the program for less than a year) gain reading skills that impact positively on their daily lives?

[3] Why are learners new to the NLC (in the program for less than a year) deciding to continue their participation or deciding to leave the program?

[4] Are there demonstrable second-generation effects on the children of learners in the NLC program for more than one year? Is there evidence that the children of long-term learners perform better in school and in reading since children's fathers or mothers began attending the NLC?

[5] Do the reading assessment/analysis instruments used internally by the NLC, or the standardized Tests of Adult Basic Education (TABE) used by most other reading programs, correlate with the learners' tangible reading abilities in their daily lives?

Illustrative Case: Wes Darby*

Wes Darby, an African-American man raised in the South, enrolled in the Newark Literacy Campaign's tutorial literacy program in 1987 at age 32. He was initially described by a veteran tutor as "the least able reader I have ever experienced." Now, as we shall see, Wes reads on the job, reads newspapers and novels, and helps his children with their schoolwork. Recently, he took and passed a bus driver's examination.

* All names in this report and some slight details have been changed to safeguard confidentiality.

From last spring's interview we know that Wes was one of 20 children who grew up on a sharecrop farm in North Carolina. He remembers that his family's "share" was $1,000, paid yearly. His father died about 1960 or '61 and Wes recalls little about him except that he "didn't have much education." He does not often speak about his mother and his life with her as a child. She is still alive and has her own farm in North Carolina. Wes's relations with his brothers and sisters have been close and supportive. He is still in contact with all of them and even knows the names of their spouses and children. Some of his siblings are no longer living and he specifically mentions that Billy-John passed away. The tutor logs note that Billy-John was hospitalized when helping West with a homework assignment to write his life story. Like almost everyone we encountered at NLC, Wes had personal tragedies to contend with as he worked himself through the process of learning to read. Although he missed some time as a result of personal problems he had to handle, he always returned.

The fact that Wes came from the rural South and had been forced to work all his life may partially explain his strong motivation. He left North Carolina at the age of 15 in pursuit, he said, "of a better life for myself," and is using his newly gained reading skills to further that goal.

When asked at what age he started school, Wes said quite

seriously "I was thirty-three years old." Actually, he began school when he was 10, but because he had to "work the field" he attended for only a few months a year. He was the oldest child in every grade and spent a couple of years in each grade until he was passed along. When he reached fifth grade at the age of 15, he quit and left North Carolina.

It would have been remarkable had he not quit. Wes was the biggest child in class and was lampooned as the class dummy by teachers and other students. Since he attended school only intermittently, he never learned to read: "I would try to keep up, but it was like being blind." For Wes, like many NLC learners, school was a stigmatizing experience that inculcated a chronic fear of being exposed and humiliated for his inability to read.

On leaving school, Wes (and soon after a sister, brother, and cousin) came to Newark looking for more opportunity. He found a job at a box company where he still works. Wes coped with his illiteracy by observing, asking questions, and having close relatives read for him. A cousin filled out the box company job application. Once on the job, Wes did not have to read.

The impetus for Wes deciding to enter NLC was an experience he had at a local clinic where he went for a toothache. He described his toothache as so bad "I could nearly cry." When the

clerk threw forms at him and told him he had to fill them out himself, he left in despair. Angry, and finally acknowledging his problem, Wes went home and asked his sister where he could learn to read. Soon after he enrolled at NLC. In the follow-up interview he stated that, as a result, "my life turned around."

Intake/attendance records indicate that Wes started in the program on March 5, 1987. He attended 25 sessions until November 4, 1987. He then stopped-out, not returning until June 1, 1988. The tutor logs show participation in 18 sessions until October 5, 1988. From that point there are occasional log entries dated from November 16, 1988 to August 29, 1990. After that, Wes's attendance has been regular.

A tutor log dated 5/13/87 quotes Wes as saying that before coming to NLC "I couldn't read nothing." In the spring, 1991 interview, however, Wes reported that he now reads books, letters, mail, and newspapers. At work, he reads signs and labels and employee-related memos and letters which he could not read before.

His first tutor log, dated 5/7/87, indicated that Wes was having difficulty "guessing [predicting] words," but became better at it when the entire context was explained. The logs document steady improvement as Wes worked with different tutors over several years. They also indicate he had an eyesight problem; after getting glasses his reading improved markedly. Wes then began

learning to write. The tutors report continued improvement both in the actual physical exercise of writing and in organization, grammar, and spelling. There is an allusion to an accident and that for some time afterwards he was having trouble concentrating. It was at this time that his brother Billy-John was hospitalized; according to his tutor, Wes did not keep up with his homework and as a result his performance suffered. He also had to go to court several times in his successful effort to gain custody of his two sons. Wes has four other children, three boys and a girl. One son is 17 and the other children are in elementary school.

At the time of the **follow-up interview**, in November, 1991, Wes characterized his progress in reading as "great." When asked for specifics, he said he can go out and look for a job on his own, that he reads "difficult" books, and that he helps his children with their schoolwork. He also reported a substantial increase in wages. He explained that he was offered a higher-paying job someplace else and when he reported that at work the company matched the offer. He is using computers now in his job at the box factory and plans to get a degree in this field after achieving his immediate goal of passing the GED examination. The **fall, 1991 Tutor Interview** confirms these achievements. Wes notes that his life has changed in other important ways: "I can face people better than I use to. I use to feel that I could not talk to people because I was afraid, but now I'm more confident.

I know my rights. When you can't read, you have to sit in the corner." He adds: "When you can't read you got fear. I don't have fear no more."

Wes and his current tutor agree he is much more independent now. For example, he has learned to handle his own bills and a checking account. In reply to a question about Wes' progress, his tutor stated "It has been incredible. He has progressed to the point where he can read difficult material and decipher its meaning on his own. He uses his own resources to discover the meaning of words. His attitude toward reading has definitely changed." According to Wes, the primary benefit he has gained from the program is "the ability to motivate myself."

Despite the fact that Wes has had four tutors in as many years, he says he enjoyed working with all of them, a sentiment that they reciprocate. Most, but not all students at NLC, have been equally fortunate. All of Wes's tutors employed an approach to reading instruction known as "Reading Naturally," a whole language method that stresses meaning and context. [Reading methods employed at NLC are discussed subsequently].

Wes, as noted above, is raising his children by himself. He reports that they are doing well. "Last year they did okay but I sent them to summer school because I didn't have a baby sitter. But this year James got an F in math. His teacher said he didn't

need to go to summer school, that he passed to the next grade. But I still sent him to summer school. You can never get too much education." He adds that his children are all excellent readers, a fact in which he takes great pride.

Following his enrollment at NLC, Wes has taken progressively more responsibility for helping his children with their schoolwork. 'I sit down, see them read, look at them doing homework. Teacher sent a letter home. George was talking out loud in class. I get on my children whenever the teacher sends things home. I want them to get the education that I did not get."

Wes talks of coming back to NLC as a tutor after he achieves his goal of getting a degree in computer science. Meanwhile, though a busy man, he manages to attend night school to hone his trumpet-playing skills.

The Research Questions

The Wes Darby case study addressed all the applicable research questions except the last which concerns the validity of reading assessment tools. With respect to this question, the short answer for Wes is "no." A TABE grade-equivalent reading score of 1.6 is utterly incongruent with his tangible reading ability in his everyday life. The assessment issue, notably the TABE's

validity for a low-literate population, is discussed in Chapter 4.

Note on Theory & Method

As the Wes Darby case illustrates, we asked many questions about learners' family histories and circumstances and their early school experiences. We did so on the assumption that literacy-related beliefs, attitudes, and behaviors could best be understood by mapping and then connecting past experiences to the chain of subsequent actions and events culminating in the role of adult literacy learner. Of course, what all persons believe and do in adult life is greatly influenced by past experiences. The learners whose perspectives and actions we strove to understand did not just drop from the skies at age 30 or 40. Thus, we adopted the view expressed by McGoldrick and Gerson (1985, p. 3) that "by scanning the family system historically and assessing previous life cycle transitions, one can place present issues in the context of . . . evolutionary patterns."

Methods & Data Sources

In the case study narrative the data sources and instruments were italicized. Each source and method is briefly explained below in the order in which it was referenced.

[1] **Last Spring's Interview.** The reference here is to in-depth personal interviews with the NLC learners conducted in May, June, and July, 1991. The average interview lasted from 45 minutes to an hour. The interviews were tape recorded and then transcribed. A copy of the interview outline can be found in the methodological appendices.

[2] **Tutor Logs.** Following each individual meeting, tutors are asked to complete a form called "Summary of the Tutoring Session." Most of the tutors took this responsibility quite seriously, writing detailed, thoughtful accounts of what occurred during the session, including materials, activities, student successes and problems, and plans for the next session. Some tutors entered only cursory summaries, such as "Mary read three pages of her life history with limited comprehension." At the more remote of the three program sites, the tutors did not fill out the session summaries. This problem has since been corrected.

[3] **Follow-Up Interview.** In January and February, 1992, the NLC learners were reinterviewed in person or by telephone to update the information -- particularly on application of reading skills -- they had shared with us six to eight months earlier. Those students who had stopped-out or left the program were also interviewed with an emphasis on why they left, how much they felt their reading skills had improved to date of leaving, and in what

ways, if any, they had applied their reading skills in their everyday lives. A **Leaver Interview Guide** was used to collect these data.

[4] **Intake/Attendance Records.** In addition to logs, each student's file contained a "Learner Intake" and "Tutor Registration" form. The Learner Intake form contains the student's address, age, marital status, and other background information. It also has sections on prior schooling, employment, and reading practices (e.g., "Do you read your own mail"?). The Tutor Registration form lists similar background information and data on employment and educational attainment. Attendance records are kept on lined sheets used to enter dates of tutoring sessions.

[5] **Tutor Questionnaire.** In November, 1991 a two-page questionnaire was mailed to all 40 tutors. After a second mailing, the remaining non-respondents were interviewed by telephone or in person. Tutors were asked, among other things, to describe their learners' reading ability and application of reading skills in everyday life. We relied heavily on the tutors' responses to verify the learners' self-reports. The only evidence we uncovered of inaccurate self-reports pertained to the learners' estimates of reading ability before enrolling at NLC. In at least six cases, intake assessments, initial logs, or tutor

statements indicated that learners overestimated or exaggerated their initial reading proficiency.

Other Data Sources

Additional information about students and student-tutor relationships was obtained from direct observation, informant interviews (mainly NLC staff), test results, and from the spring, 1990, preliminary evaluation conducted by the present researchers. Nine of the 1991 long-term learners were also interviewed early in 1990 and their tutors completed a questionnaire similar to the one described above. Wes Darby was one of the nine. All instruments and data forms are reproduced in the methodological appendices.

Illustrative Findings

Learner Progress

As documented above, Wes Darby entered the program unable to read at all. Now, five years later, minus considerable stopout time, he has learned to read and regularly uses his reading skills to his personal advantage and satisfaction. In this respect, Wes is typical of the long term learners.

Along with general satisfaction, tutors and some learners did suggest ways in which NLC might be even more effective in meeting students' needs. Their comments mostly addressed the organization and supervision of instruction -- for example, the need expressed by several learners for more than two hours of tutoring per week. A few long-term students saw possible advantages, for better readers, to a phased transition from individual to small group tutorials. Many tutors expressed a need for better professional support as well as follow-up training. These and related issues, such as the problem of tutor turnover, are explored more fully in Chapters 3 and 5.

Cultural Roots

Wes Darby came from a large family that worked hard to eke a living out of a small farm. In this respect, he typifies many successful learners who also grew up on farms, not only in the South, but in the Caribbean and West Africa. The high ratio of foreign- and rural-born to U.S. urban-born learners (26 to 12) may be related to this observation. Given Newark's population demographics, the high proportion of Southern and foreign-born learners may not be a chance occurrence. Instead, it seems that NLC attracts people with traditional, often rural-rooted values, a strong work ethic, and a developed sense of personal responsibility and self-efficacy. This is not to say the Newark-born learners [as opposed to non-participants] are different, but

only that they seem oddly in the minority.

A low proportion of urban-born, African-American participants in NLC would be expected in light of Ogbu's [1990] theory of voluntary and involuntary minority groups. According to Ogbu:

> "Some minority groups are more successful than others at becoming literate and numerate. 'Voluntary' minorities do better because they came to the United States expecting to improve their status through participation in such American institutions as the education system. 'Involuntary' minorities have less success because they were incorporated into American society against their will and had no such expectation. The two minority types perceive and respond differently to educational institutions and those who control them." [1990, p. 141]

In Ogbu's analysis, African-Americans are involuntary or castelike minorities because they are among those peoples "initially brought into the United States through slavery, conquest, or colonization" [p. 145], and because they were and still are denied equal opportunity, and are therefore discouraged "from investing time and effort in education. . . and striving for academic achievement" [p. 156].

Our data suggest a possible variation on the theory: that minorities who, as adults, voluntarily immigrate **within** national boundaries, specifically from the South of the USA to the North, like cross-cultural immigrants, may be motivated in large part by hope for a better life -- a life in which learning and literacy could play a part.

In the practice of adult literacy education, support for Ogbu's theory might be seen in the fact that the foreign-born flock to English as a second language programs in great numbers, whereas native-born Americans are a much more difficult group to reach and retain (see Hayes & Darkenwald, 1988).

Advantage Male

Although Wes Darby's life has not been easy, his problems and those of nearly all the males in our sample pale in comparison with those of most of the women, who labor under multiple handicaps that can make their lives miserable and hinder their learning. Wes and most of the other men are gainfully employed, but most of the women are not. A reasonably secure job is the source of more good things than a predictable paycheck.

As crucial as work is, "advantage male" means more than having a job and the many pecuniary and non-pecuniary benefits that issue from paid work. It also means independence from the cares and

role overload of being a female head-of-household -- paying the rent, putting food on the table, cleaning and washing and caring fcr children, negotiating the health, welfare and unemployment bureaucracies, and on and on. Wes and most of the other NLC men care about their children and support them emotionally and financially. Nonetheless, their life circumstances do not pose the hurdles to overcoming illiteracy that we observed with the NLC women.

End Note: Tutors & Learning

As mentioned in the case study, Wes Darby has had four quite able tutors and his relations with each have been close and friendly. His original tutor, who still sees him occasionally, described their relationship in these words: "I have respect for Wes's drive and character. I think we are friends. I could call on him for help if needed." Her last comment implies a tie of equality and mutuality, a true friendship. After a few months, this kind of closeness and trust quite often develops between tutors and learners at NLC. Although a warm personal friendship is not essential to learners' persisting and progressing, a cordial and trusting relationship is essential. So, too, is a tutor's ability to teach effectively. For these and other reasons discussed subsequently, a satisfactory relationship sometimes fails to develop.

A warm, trusting, but not totally equal relationship can and often does result in a dependency that has negative consequences. At NLC, tutors are asked to make a commitment for one year and this is often the duration of their involvement. When a tutor leaves, a quick transition to a new tutor sometimes fails to occur. As a result, the learner will often leave along with the tutor. This seems to be a serious problem in other tutorial literacy programs (see Fingeret & Danin, 1991).

The fragility of the resolve to persist seems to be linked to insecurity resulting from an internalized sense of stigma that seldom disappears immediately after enrollment. Typically, as much as a year must pass before the stigma of illiteracy loses its destructive force.

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Chapter Two

FAMILY & EARLY SCHOOL EXPERIENCE

It was not the case, as might be supposed, that most of the NLC literacy learners grew up without the benefit of literate adult helpers and role models. Even if one or both parents were illiterate, there was almost always a grandmother, uncle, or another family member -- often an older sibling -- who was able to read. Nonetheless, it is true that all but one of our 40 learners was raised in poverty and in families characterized by little formal schooling and little concern for reading anything but the Bible. Moreover, in rural Georgia, Jamaica, or Senegal there was little need or opportunity to read or even go to school. The daily toil of farmwork and homemaking relegated schooling and reading to the margins of everyday life. Even in urban Newark, where both the demands and opportunities for gaining literacy skills were far greater, the press of economic survival and family breakdown militated against educational success.

Our conclusion that early family and school experiences are closely intertwined is not novel, but it is germane to gaining a fuller understanding of the origins of adult illiteracy and why the problem does not readily yield to conventional literacy education practices that appear to be appropriate.

Illustrative Cases

Below we present some illustrative case material to provide a more concrete and holistic account of NLC learners' childhood experiences as they themselves remembered and interpreted them. The first two cases focus primarily on family and school experiences. The last extends the narrative to illustrate connections between early socialization experiences and the role of adult literacy learner.

Case 1: Sally James, African-American, 42, 2 years at NLC

Sally was born in Alabama to a poor family whose 10 members earned a living as farm laborers on land owned by wealthy whites. They were not even sharecroppers, but rather labored for a weekly family wage of $12.50 [$640 yearly in the 1960's!]. They "pulled corn" and picked cotton, beans, and peaches, tilled the soil, repaired the barns -- whatever was needed. As Sally recalls, "It was hard work, sun-up to sun-down; sometimes it went to nine o'clock at night." For all their labor, the Jameses could only eke out the barest and most brutal existence.

Sally's father was an alcoholic who, in her words, "drunk hisself to death," although not before causing his family great grief. His drinking finally led to a divorce when Sally was 14 and "old

enough to understand." Despite everything, she was close to her father and defends him by saying he "drank but he worked." For Sally, the work ethic is deeply rooted.

Following the divorce, her older brother Jim was sent to live with his paternal grandmother. Jim, said Sally, "followed my father's footsteps and drank a lot. One day he was drunk and fell in the river and drowned." Woe followed woe as Sally recounted the fates of other siblings. For example, there was a younger sister who died in her twenties. "It was so bizarre. She wasn't sick at all, but, um, one night she ate dinner and layed across the bed and just passed off." [Recently, Sally's oldest son, George, a drug addict, died of AIDS, and her ex-husband, whom she divorced after 21 years, is currently dying from the disease.]

There was no time for school in the James family. All of their efforts were directed at survival. Not one of the children went to school and no one in the family could read. Sally recalls: "I never went to school that much cause most of the time we had to work, you know, in the fields. The only time we went to school was when it rained, when we couldn't work the field." By the time Sally was 15, there was no more school even on rainy days. She began having children, first George and a year later Johnny, who was fathered by a different man. The following year Sally and her twin brother Robert moved to Newark with her two

boys. She shared an apartment with Robert until she could afford a place of her own. Marriage followed and a third child, Christine.

Despite her wretched childhood, and great sorrow and hardship in adult life, Sally James has not succumbed to self-pity, or the despairing apathy that surrounds her in the Newark ghetto. When it was suggested she was managing things pretty well these days, she replied "yes, so, you know, I think the Lord bless me." On the transcript a researcher scribbled: "Her life was and is chaos! Horrid! How can she say this!" Later, when questioned about her experience at NLC, she replied with a warm laugh: "I tell you, like I told Joyce, my tutor, that there ain't no stoppin me!" In May, 1992 she was still at it. To say Sally James is a survivor is to slight her tremendous courage and willpower. Another term is needed; perhaps "prevailer," not only for Sally but for many others at NLC.

Case 2: Bill Doulton, African-American, 52, 4 years at NLC

Bill Doulton was born in Newark in 1940. He never knew his father. His mother, like many women during World War II, worked in a factory to support Bill and his sister Lovita. The job put food on the table, but because of Mrs. Doulton's work schedule, Bill was unable to start school until the age of seven. Bill's mother indulged and pampered him as he was her only boy for 17

years. When she married in the 1950's, Bill found himself with five new brothers and sisters.

The Grant Avenue school was Bill's first experience with public education. Starting school late put Bill at an academic disadvantage. However, unlike the others at NLC, he had a good time until "thrown out" at age 16 for constant fighting. "That's why I didn't learn anything. I always loved to fight. It was something. I wanted to be a boxer. I wouldn't listen to the teachers." Bill had another problem with school, or, more accurately, the school had another problem with Bill. "I used to always mess with the girls. I didn't learn nothing because I was chasing the girls. No reading, no spelling, no nothing." His mother's reaction to his fighting and girl-chasing was simply that "boys will be boys." When he got older Bill upbraided his mother for not "forcing me to go to school to learn something." He adds: "I told her that she didn't give me the proper education in school because I didn't go to school until I was seven."

Although poor, Bill's mother and step-father managed to provide a fairly stable and supportive family environment. Bill was the only member of the Doulton family who could not read. Several siblings, as was often the case with NLC learners, even went to college.

At sixteen Bill found himself looking for work and unable to read. Soon, however, a job doing maintenance work at a cemetery became available and a friend filled-out the job application. The following year, at age 17 he found work at the plastics company where he has been employed for the past 34 years.

After finding steady work Bill got married and eventually had five children. His first wife, Janice, finished high school and then a two year degree part-time, becoming a nurse. Bill realizes now that her achievements created a chasm between them. She harped on his dependence and "called me lazy because I couldn't read." After 14 years of marriage, Janice filed for divorce, an event that seemed to sober Bill.

His second marriage and starting at NLC went hand in hand. His second wife encouraged Bill to enroll and Bill was ready. He wanted to be able to read the Bible in church, the sports pages, and his mail. In 1987, Bill Doulton had no idea how greatly his life would change. His case is continued in Chapter 3.

Case 3: Bessie Bates, African-American, 37, 3 years at NLC

Bessie was born and raised in Newark, as was her mother, Lila, whom we also interviewed. As a second generation urban African-American, Bessie seems to be firmly rooted in the culture of the

inner city. Both parents were present in the family household until Bessie was 16 years old. Her father "moved out" at that time but did not abandon the family. "He still come there and check up on us. And give us food and what we need and stuff. And he beat us if he needed [laugh]." Harsh discipline was a staple in the household. Lila, too, beat Bessie as punishment for her refusal to read in school. Bessie seems to harbor no resentment, seeing the beatings as deserved. Although hardly adherents of Dr. Spock, at least her parents cared, or so it seems.

Bessie's three siblings, two brothers and a sister who live in Newark, do not seem an important part of her life, but she is close to her mother who lives down the street from her. The affection and mutual support between the two women was evident in the extended interview. Although angry and frustrated by Bessie's refusal to read as a youngster, Lila now takes pride in her daughter's interest in and progress with reading. Contrasting Bessie's former reluctance to read with her current abilities, her mother laughingly says, "you can't get her nose out of a book now."

Although Bessie did not talk much about her siblings, she stated a willingness to speak about the years in which she lived with her parents. She indicates that this willingness is one of the results of her learning to read. Before she learned to read, she

tells the interviewer, she would have minded discussing her growing up. She does not mind now because she is no longer "shy." The word "shy" seems to obsess Bessie, who uses it to indicate her embarrassment at not being able to read and her sense that she was a slow, incompetent reader in both school and church.

Bessie started school at age six and continued through grade twelve, spending her high school years at a girl's trade school. When asked why she thought she was slow, Bessie replied that the reason was her "shyness." She went on to describe her school experiences. "All the time when I would read, the other kids would laugh; they'd be laughing, and, like, I'm the one who would be reading." (Why did they laugh?) "Because I read slow." (How did that affect your schooling?) "It affected it bad (laugh). Because I wouldn't read. I do math, I do everything, I just couldn't read. The teacher ask me to read and I just sit there, I won't even answer, I won't do nothing. My mother used to beat me to make me read, but I wasn't reading. I was so ashamed." Similar experiences in church school resulted in the same coping strategy. By withdrawing from reading activities, Bessie protected herself from the scorn of others.

Although she attended 12 years of school, Bessie's reading skills were rudimentary. Before coming to NLC she was able to read the names of foods on can and jar labels for instance, but was not

able to read street signs, mail, or newspapers. Her shame and embarrassment were expressed even in her physical posture. She walked on the street with her head down, unwilling to be confronted with the many "texts" that she could not understand.

In order to get by in a literate world, Bessie relied on others whom she could trust not to reveal her illiteracy. Her mother and a cousin read her mail to her and helped with other reading needs. At work a "girlfriend" read the charts that accompanied the machines that she operated. Bessie acknowledges their role while asserting "I wouldn't let nobody know I couldn't read." These were people she could ask for help without fear of further shame or embarrassment. In resolutely hiding her illiteracy, Bessie typified the NLC learners. Strategies for "passing" were diverse and ingenious, but living a lie was psychically enervating, never totally successful, and always frustrating.

Bessie found out about NLC through a "program for bad boys" that her teenage son attended. When asking about reading help for him, she also asked for herself. This was not her first attempt to improve her reading skills, however. "Way before then I was trying to get help. I went to the adult learning school. I went for a year. But that ain't nothin' like I'm in now. That was a whole classroom full of kids, teachers. You know, one teacher. I like a lot the reading now. It's one-to-one." (So you get further one-to-one?) "Yeah! I feel more comfortable too." A

handful of NLC learners had attended other literacy programs; like Bessie, they found that classroom instruction did not work for them and often felt intimidated.

Bessie put aside her "shyness" and worked hard to improve her reading. In the privacy of the tutoring environment she could be forthright about her illiteracy and work directly to overcome it. Feelings of trust between tutor and learner developed, as in other cases, over a period of several months. In reflecting on their relationship, her tutor stated that "Bessie and I have a freer and easier relationship than at the start. We have developed a give and take, an ease in the tutorial setting." When Bessie says of Marie, her tutor, "she helps a lot," she amplifies by describing the writing exercises that allowed her to express her inner feelings and a relationship that enabled her to struggle with reading difficulties without shame or discouragement.

Bessie started the program with the desire to learn to read, to be free from the tangible and emotional constraints that limited her. She has improved her reading significantly and wants to continue her learning, to get her GED and driver's license. Obstacles remain, which are identified by Bessie as "things trying to stop me," and by her tutor as housing and family problems. Nevertheless, Bessie's determination is even stronger now -- "I push that to the side and keep on going. Ain't nuttin

gonna get in the way."

Reading has changed Bessie's relationships both at home and at work. She can read to her grandchildren and enjoys doing so. She hopes that her actions will set an example for her children and grandchildren for their own learning.

In her relationship with Lila the past rather than the future resonates for both mother and daughter. When she helps her mother with reading, both she and her mother delight in the reversal of their former roles. Having failed as a child to meet her mother's demand that she learn to read, Bessie has achieved competence as an adult and is no longer childlike in that aspect of her relation to her mother.

At work Bessie no longer needs the aid of others to read instructions, but can function independently. She has been working since age 19, but her ability to apply for and succeed in jobs with responsibilities that include reading has been extremely limited. By learning to read, Bessie has been able to perform her current job better. Should she wish to change jobs, she will be able to seek positions requiring reading ability and, when she gets a driver's license [she now has a permit], she will be able to travel to them if they are outside the range of public transportation.

A very pronounced change is Bessie's new perception of herself as

a capable learner and adult. She says pointedly: "I don't walk with my head down no more. I walk with my head up." She means this both literally and figuratively. No longer "shy," Bessie actively responds to the texts that surround her on the street. Describing her experience of reading street signs, she creates a mock dialogue with herself: "Oh, I read that! I'm shocked!" Then she laughs, saying "I shocked my own self!"

The "shock" of realizing that she could accomplish the goal of learning to read may underpin her desire to persevere and increase her skills. She can act publicly in the community to demonstrate these skills, as she shows, for instance, by having and maintaining her own savings account. As her perception of the world around her is stretched through her ability to read, her goals for herself are also expanded.

In summary, Bessie's accomplishments at NLC have had a major impact on her life. External and internal barriers that combined to prevent her from succeeding in functioning effectively have been greatly mitigated. She has achieved her initial goals and set new targets for herself.

Although the help and support of her mother and tutor were important in the process, Bessie brought a determination to persist to the program. She describes herself as "stubborn" and "in a shell" before learning to read, yet she took the first step

to change her condition.

A point stressed in this chapter is the interplay between family and school experience. In the quotation below, Lawrence Cremin captures what we wish to convey.

> Every family has a curriculum, which it teaches quite deliberately and systematically over time. Every church and synagogue has a curriculum, which it teaches deliberately and systematically over time -- the Old and New Testaments, after all, are among our oldest curricula, and so are the Missal and Mass, and so is the Book of Common Prayer. And every employer has a curriculum, which he teaches deliberately and systematically over time; the curriculum includes not only the technical skills of typing or welding or reaping or teaching but also the social skills of carrying out those activities in concert with others. . . . (1976, p. 22)

We did not select the case studies to conform to what Cremin asserts above, but, looking back, his words evoke images of Wes, Sally, Bill, and Bessie growing up in families that systematically taught very fundamental "mainstream" values. And these values were reinforced by church and scripture, by teachers, and even by early experience in the workplace.

Of course, family, church, school and work can be profoundly miseducative, as can peer groups, the media, and other sources of

learning and socialization. On balance, however, positive influences seemed to us dominant among the NLC learners.

Atypical Characteristics

From the case studies and interpretations presented thus far it should be apparent that the NLC learners are a special group in many ways. True, they exhibit some characteristics of the African-American urban "underclass" portrayed in ethnographies such as Stack's **All Our Kin** (1974) and in sociological analyses like Wilson's **The Truly Disadvantaged** (1987), but in many important respects they are not representative of the inner-city poor.

The very fact that the NLC learners chose to enroll in an adult literacy program in order to change their lives marks them as atypical. We have already touched on some aspects of atypicality, such as the prevalence of learners who hold traditional values, often deriving from a rural upbringing. Our data indicate another distinguishing characteristic that relates directly to the role of literacy learner, which could be called "independence."

In many ways the NLC learners march to a different drummer. A particularly salient dimension of what we term independence is alienation that takes the form of rejecting those values and

behavior patterns of the ghetto community that violate larger societal norms. Drug abuse, crime, and other manifestations of individual and social pathology are roundly condemned. Unemployment and welfare dependency are not accepted as a "way of life" even by the majority of female learners who receive public assistance in the form of Aid to Families with Dependent Children. For one such woman, Claudia West, getting off AFDC is a primary motive for learning to read: "I want to be the first one in my family that can see my kids grow up without being on welfare."

The following excerpt from a theoretical memo captures the essence of this dimension of atypicality:

"The people at NLC, especially the successful learners, are somewhat isolated, somewhat disembedded from underclass structure. They are individuals determined to do for themselves. They are goal-oriented and positive toward education. They seem to have consciously distanced themselves from the ghetto community -- there is a certain detachment and resiliency about them."

We did not anticipate all that we uncovered with respect to the distinctive characteristics of the NLC learners. But now it seems to us obvious that they would not be in the program, much

less persist and make progress, were they not the kind of people we discovered them to be.

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Chapter Three

LEARNERS & TUTORS

This chapter extends and elaborates themes and issues noted briefly in Chapters 1 and 2 and introduces new ones. The primary focus is the experience of learning to read from the perspectives of both learners and tutors. Earlier issues, related to the organization of instruction, tutor turnover, and tutor training and support, re-emerge as we explore the interactions of NLC's literacy learners with texts and teachers. Topics such as stopping- and dropping-out and "success" that connect directly to these earlier issues, and to the original research questions, are addressed in detail. Testing and assessment, and the application of reading skills in everyday life, are discussed in Chapter 4.

About half the tutors in our sample were trained in an approach based upon whole-language theory and philosophy which was developed by the former NLC director and referred to as "Reading Naturally" [RN]. Most of the other half were trained in the more conventual and eclectic methods developed by Literacy Volunteers of America [LVA]. Some were trained in both and a few in the Laubach method. To attempt definitions and descriptions of these approaches to literacy instruction within this discussion would not be fruitful. Moreover, many tutors use elements of all methods -- whatever "works." The case data in this chapter

convey the concrete, and thus more useful, picture of NLC's actual practice.

Picking up Bill Doulton's case study where we left off in Chapter 2 seems a logical way to begin fleshing-out the ways in which an able tutor and motivated learner relate to texts and, of special significance, to each other.

Case Continued: Bill Doulton, Age 52, 4 Years at NLC

Jim Valerio, a 38 year-old architect of Italian descent, decided to become a tutor for the "personal satisfaction of helping someone." He was trained in the Reading Naturally method, which he says "makes a lot of sense to me." Bill Doulton had been in another literacy program for 15 months before Jim began working with him. Despite Bill's regular attendance in this classroom-based program, he felt he had learned very little. As Jim states, "Bill's reading skills were basic, focusing on each word." The two met weekly at NLC's library site, and they met regularly -- 44 times in the first 16 months. Jim used a variety of methods in working with Bill, ranging from scattered clues and cloze exercises to reading and orally retelling a story. In these 16 months prior to Bill's stopping out for a year because of a heart attack, he read 19 books, 13 without an accompanying tape.

The steady progress Bill made is evident in the tutor logs. On September 16, 1987 Jim noted: "Bill was making many sensible guesses and showing marked improvement. I told him to continue reading the book -- at least 1/2 hour each night and to go as far as he can go." The October 7 log states "Bill finished his first full book!" A sense of pride is evident in this entry. On December 12 the log notes, "We continued some scattered clue lessons. Bill mastered them well this time around. I noticed a marked improvement in his reading comprehension ability." The February 24, 1988 log notes that Jim helped Bill read and understand a union contract that he and his fellow workers at the plastics factory were negotiating. In this and many other lessons Jim made effective use of "realia," practical texts directly connected to Bill's everyday concerns and interests.

The flexibility and caring of Jim Valerio is seen in the July 13, 1988 log. Bill was reading **A New Life for Sarita** and seemed not to like the book. Jim spoke with NLC's director, who had talked with Bill and discovered he had trouble pronouncing the word "Sarita." She suggested that Bill use a nickname for Sarita and all went well. A less dedicated tutor might have tried to "plough through the text" or have failed to notice Bill's discomfort.

In the March 29 log Jim writes, "Bill is doing quite well. . . he understands what he is reading." The June 16 entry reads, "We

spent the session reading to each other. Bill followed along well and showed improvement in his reading skills when it was his turn to read."

Three years later, on April 4, 1991, the log entry is particularly telling. Jim writes, "Bill had been away for the past several weeks because he had been negotiating his union contract. The contract was signed and it was a successful negotiation without any givebacks that the company wanted and with salary/wage increases the members are pleased with."

Largely because of his vastly improved reading skills and newly-gained confidence, Bill has become chief shop steward at the plastics factory. In talking with us in July, 1991, Bill, too, mentioned negotiating the union contract. When asked what difference NLC had made in his life, Bill was eager to talk.

"Well, it made a whole lot of difference because now, what I am saying is, before I used to go buy a chair, like in a box or whatever it is. Now I can sit back and read the instructions and put it together. Before, I wouldn't know how to put it together." (So, you are reading labels.) "I can read street signs now and I am negotiating contracts for the company with the union. I am getting so that I can write up a grievance -- with the help of my tutor I am writing up a grievance against the factory where I work. Bill goes on to say, "I like the program,

I thank God for it. I really like the program. It was a whole lot of help for me and it still is a lot of help and I have a nice tutor. Me and him [Jim] are getting along real well."

At the end of the interview, Bill reasserts his faith in the program, but feels frustrated in his efforts to proselytize: "I recommend it to anybody. I try to get people at my job, but they are too scared. Some are younger; I can't understand why they can't come. And some are older. The older ones feel it's too late." **"Too scared."** That, we are convinced, is not why they **"can't** come," but the primary reason why they **won't** come. The fear, of course, derives from stigma.

There is one other thing that frustrates Bill. He wants to move ahead faster. "Number one, I would like to have more lessons. Instead of once a week, it should be three times a week. . . . We have to have more time because, you know, it's different, like a child goes to school for eight hours a day or seven hours a day. I understand that I work, have to work [at the factory], but . . . I'm saying that if I studied three sessions it would be much better. I had accomplished a whole lot, but with the heart attack I missed that one year that throwed me behind."

In October, 1991, Jim Valerio was transferred out of state. He knew he and Bill would miss each other, but he left feeling good: "It's been very gratifying to see my student prosper and to know

that I've played a major role in his achievements." Bill had to wait five months -- a typical hiatus -- before he was rematched with a new tutor in February, 1992. Not a heart attack this time, but he has been thrown behind once again. Other NLC students do not wait for a rematch, they simply leave when their tutor does.

Commentary

What makes an outstanding tutor? At least a partial answer should be evident from the foregoing account of Jim Valerio's relationship with Bill Doulton. Certainly, a warm, empathetic personality is important, as is flexibility, resourcefulness, confidence, and perseverance. A sine qua non is technical knowledge and skill -- the ability to teach reading effectively in a one-on-one mode. Finally, good tutors are invariably counselors, listening to their learners' problems and concerns, offering advice, and, when necessary, acting as advocates -- for example, intervening on behalf of a student with a public health agency, or using personal contacts to resolve a problem related to public assistance benefits.

Since they volunteer to be tutors, the great majority like the work and are good at it. Others recognize their limitations or dislike tutoring and quit. However, when tutors with serious limitations stay on, problems develop that can be difficult or

awkward to resolve. At NLC we identified only three such tutors. One is Dorothea Reed, who has tutored Alice Martin for about two years.

Profile of a Limited Tutor

During our interview with Alice Martin, she brought up the issue of Dorothea's competence in the following exchange taken from the transcript.

"I was talking with that young woman who brought me over here [for the interview]. I was tellin' her that Dorothea never really told me a lot, you know? A lot of the time I was sure, but she wasn't sure, you know? And once, when I wanted to get another tutor, I had to go over to the office, but they was saying that tutors was short, you know, and that would mean that I would be out of school three or four months before they find me another tutor. [At this point, Alice mentions Dorothea's frequent absences and the interviewer asks if she is "starting to come now".] Alice replies, "She's starting to be a little better, but I don't know how long it will last. . . . She don't, don't really do her job. Like, you know, I don't know if it's her job or what, you know, I don't know what they get paid. Some people [other learners] say it's volunteer, you know, and we got to deal with it. Most of it [learning] I did, I did on my own."

Dorothea is not totally unaware of her limitations. In the tutor questionnaire she states that the training in Reading Naturally was sufficient, but "I think the writing process of the learner should be explained in more detail." When asked to describe the nature of the personal relationship with the learner, Dorothea replied: "The relationship is good. It's kind of open too. If she feels that I'm not doing right, whether not showing up to not explaining well, she lets me know. I let her know when she's slacking up or not trying to the best of her ability. It's a nice relationship."

Although verbally quite articulate, Dorothea's writing, as evidenced by the logs, is very poor. She has a limited understanding of punctuation, capitalization, and spelling [the quotations we included from her questionnaire would have been very confusing had we not edited her writing], and her grasp of sentence structure is poor. Dorothea's limitations are mainly "academic." She is a warm young woman and obviously likes and cares about her long-time learner. The liking is reciprocated, but Alice has improved her reading skills so much at this point that Dorothea is no longer much help. The situation could, it seems, be resolved by re-assigning Dorothea to a low-level beginning learner. Explaining the reason for a re-assignment could be awkward, which is not an excuse, but may be why it has not occurred.

More Days, More Hours

Bill Doulton is not the only learner at NLC who wants to devote more than a few hours a week to improving his reading ability. Several others told us the same thing, giving the same reasons. Dora Godwin, an African-born woman in her mid-twenties, was one.

"I once told my tutor that, um, the program wasn't fast enough . . . . I'd like to have three hours and then maybe come four days a week. Something you do every other day and not just once a week. . . . My tutor, I appreciate her time, you know, for doing this for me. Cause, I, I don't know what I'd do without her, you know? But I just wish it was, it was more than once a week." [We return to the issue of "more hours, more days" in Chapter 5.]

Although Dora Godwin appreciated her tutor's efforts, the tutor had some sort of personal problem that she never identified. In any event, as Dora put it, "My tutor took a break. She said she would call me, but she never did." Official records confirm that Michelle, the tutor, had taken a "leave of absence" from which she never returned. When Michelle left in the summer of 1991, so, eventually, did Dora. Though she requested a re-match, Dora was never assigned a new tutor. Tutor turnover is a serious problem that merits close examination.

Tutor Turnover, Stopouts, & Dropouts

One of the key impediments to learner success, as noted several times already, is tutor turnover. In a nutshell, this is the dynamic: A tutor's departure leads to one of two negative consequences, either a forced stopout for several months or the departure of the learner. Of course, tutor turnover is not the only reason why learners stop out or leave for good before attaining their goals. We discuss the other reasons below. However, tutor turnover is a major factor in stopping out and dropping out and, of particular importance, it is a factor over which program staff have some control, at least potentially. Our data indicate that tutor turnover can be influenced by program staff who are aware of and take action on tutors' concerns. These concerns, which are explored subsequently, revolve around a widely-felt need for follow-up training and for access to expert assistance when questions or problems arise.

Most people, including volunteers, need to feel that they are doing their jobs ably or they will not be satisfied. Dissatisfied volunteer workers can and do simply walk away. Consequently, there is a link between tutor turnover rates and the provision of adequate initial training, follow-up training, and support.

The quotations below, from responses to the May, 1990

"Preliminary Evaluation" tutor questionnaire and the fall, 1991 tutor questionnaire, provide a sampling of tutors' concerns, criticisms, and suggestions related to training, support, and related matters. We included the 1990 data because the trainers and training provision did not change in the interim. One question asked both in 1990 and 1991 was, "Do you feel your training was sufficient?" followed by "Yes" and "No" response options and "If No, why not?"

Case 1: Male, RN Trained, 1 year experience. "I would like more time with [the coordinator] to review my work with our learner. I need review as much as my learner does." [1990]

Case 2: Male, RN Trained, 3 years experience. "After initial training there was no real re-training or evaluation of my ability to teach." He suggests: "Check the tutoring by direct observation and feedback by qualified teachers." [1990]

Case 3: Female, RN Trained, 7 months experience. She stated that the training was not sufficient because there was "No written testing involved to see if you know what you are supposed to know." She suggests "a written test and assigning a new tutor to an established learner/tutor." [1990]

Case 4: Female, LVA Trained, 8 months experience. This tutor offered a comment on how the site coordinator could be more

helpful. "It would be more helpful if she was able to dedicate more of her time to tutors when they have questions. I feel this program is excellent. However, it is overwhelmed with tutors as well as learners and one person cannot train, monitor, teach, etc. by himself/herself." [1990]

Case 5: Female, LVA Trained, 9 months experience. The tutor felt training was not sufficient because "I did not expect a learner who could not read at all, or recognize the most basic letters. I felt unprepared." She states she switched to the Laubach method because "the learner needed to conquer the basics first." [1991]

Case 6: Female, RN & LVA Trained, 2 years experience. This tutor answers "yes and no" to the question about sufficient training, saying "LVA training was thorough. Reading Naturally, the method I prefer to use, was more or less training as I went along and needed to know the next step." [1991]

Case 7: Male, LVA Trained, 2 years experience. This tutor found the training sufficient, but made this suggestion for programmatic change: "Scheduling/procedure modification so that students can still have lesson and exercises when assigned tutor is unavailable -- use tutors whose students are unavailable that week." [1990]

Case 8: Female, RN Trained, 2 years experience. Like Case 7, this tutor commented on no-shows, but from a different perspective. "I believe there should be more follow up with learners who don't consistently make a commitment. Tutors become frustrated and slip away. Possibly letting tutors know what the odds/experience has been so they can approach the work realistically. Also may double-up two learners to one tutor -- each at a different level of development." [1990]

Case 9: Male, LVA & RN trained, 1 years experience. Although trained initially in the LVA approach, this tutor switched to RN because "it seems to work best." He states his LVA training was not sufficient because tutors "should be exposed to all methods." In addition, he offers the following ideas for making the tutorial sessions more effective: "More interaction between tutors and site coordinators. Not to suggest the coordinator is not accessible or willing to assist, but, perhaps once a month there can be a formal meeting with the site coordinator to evaluate progress of learner." [1990]

Case 10: Laubach & RN Trained, 4 years experience. After four years of tutoring experience, including initial training in the Laubach method and subsequent training in RN, this able tutor spoke for many others when he stated that, although his training was adequate, "I don't feel completely confident on my own." [1991]

The excerpts from the tutor questionnaires presented above touch on several issues that require a creative response from the NLC staff. Our recommendations are set forth in Chapter 5. It should be stressed that nearly all the tutors judged their initial training to be sufficient, although a few quoted above felt some changes might be introduced. The crux of the matter, then, is the lack of provision for follow-up training and continuous supervision.

Leavers, Stopouts, & Dropouts

Little more needs to be said about stopping-out other than to reiterate that the stopout problem is not always a result of tutor turnover and the lack of a timely rematch. Learners become ill, have to work overtime, are overwhelmed with personal problems (especially women), or for some other reason have to take what could be called a leave of absence.

We have used the term "leavers" in a general way that encompasses stopouts, dropouts, and successful terminations. The latter are learners who attained their self-defined goals for enrolling in the first place or who were satisfied with whatever progress they made prior to leaving the program. It follows, therefore, that a dropout is a person who discontinued participation, who did not return, and who did not attain self-defined goals or who was dissatisfied with whatever progress that may have been made.

The criterion of satisfaction or dissatisfaction with progress may seem peculiar at first blush. Researchers who study attrition in high schools and colleges typically use a dichotomous classification: either one earned a diploma or degree [presumably the student's goal] or one did not and therefore "dropped out." This spare, mechanistic model seems to us invalid in general and definitely too simplistic to capture the complex dynamics of participation in adult literacy education.

The main problem with the mechanistic model is the assumption that learners enroll in programs to attain concrete goals and that the goals learners come with are appropriate or attainable as well as unchanging. As a rule, this assumption is partly or wholly false. Although, if asked, literacy learners will give reasons or goals for enrolling, these cannot always be taken at face value [one's true goal might be to make new friends], nor are they always realistic. In most cases goals or objectives evolve from the experience of learning to read, are continuously adjusted, and when achieved are replaced with new goals. For low-literate learners, "goals" such as passing the GED exam or getting a college degree are not guides to action in the present, but rather aspirations.

These are some of the considerations that prompt us to add the definitional criterion of satisfaction with one's progress in

learning to read to distinguish successful leavers from true dropouts. Further, we know from the past adult education experiences of our sample that being a dropout is not always an enduring state.

Why Some Learners Became Leavers

Between July and October, 1991, 13 of the original group of 40 were identified as leavers. Three long term learners were stopouts who returned by May, 1992. Of the leavers in this time frame, nine were women; significantly, only four were men. Just three were long term learners enrolled for more than a year. The other 10 were new learners who enrolled in May and June of 1991. After repeated attempts in November, 1991, we were able to interview 7 of the 13 leavers.

The interviewer, a young African-American woman who had just graduated from Rutgers, worked as a secretary at the NLC office and later as our research assistant. She was a familiar face around NLC and, as we independently confirmed, was liked and trusted by the learners. Because she conducted and transcribed the leaver interviews, we have considerable confidence that the respondents were candid. This conclusion is supported by our cross-checks of what the leavers reported with other data sources, such as the tutor questionnaires.

The Leaver Interview Guide consisted of three open-ended questions that were supplemented by predetermined probes. The questions were: "1. Why did you decide not to continue with your tutor at the Newark Literacy Campaign? 2. How much did the Newark Literacy Campaign help you to improve your reading ability? 3. Have your improved reading skills made any difference in your life? How? (Probe if necessary)." It was not merely an assumption that the leavers had at least slightly improved their reading skills: we knew this in advance of the interviews from consulting our data files. The replies to the first question, "Why did you decide not to continue. . ." are reproduced below.

Leaver 1: Female, Long-Term Learner. "My tutor left the program and someone was supposed to call me to set me up with someone else, but they never did. Right now I'm in another program closer to my home. I not only learn reading, but I learn math, too. It's also good because I can bring my young son."

Leaver 2: Male, New Learner. "I did not feel comfortable with my tutor and I did not know how to tell her, so rather than hurt her feelings, I just left. I would like to come back to the program and start over with a new tutor." (This never occurred)

Leaver 3: Female, Long-Term Learner. "I was having a lot of personal problems. I was very depressed and coming to class made

me worse because I was so afraid. I went to therapy and am still in therapy. I feel much better, but I am not myself. I spoke with [a staff member] and I told her that I would like to come back when I get myself together." (As of May, 1992, she has not returned.)

Leaver 4: Female, New Learner. "I had problems getting a babysitter and my tutor was supposed to be getting a [job] transfer. She stopped coming, so I stopped coming." (Her tutor did, in fact, leave.)

Leaver 5: Female, New Learner. "I was working two jobs and it was really hard for me to get to the other job on time when I was here, and I really need both jobs."

Leaver 6: Female, New Learner. "I don't have a babysitter and also it gets dark early and I have to take the bus and I'm scared to travel in the dark. I spoke with my tutor and he understood."

Leaver 7: Female, Long-Term Learner. (This is Dora Godwin whose problems with her tutor were described above.) "My tutor took a break and she said she would call me when she was ready to come back. But she never did. I am still interested in the program and would like to continue with a new tutor." The interviewer relayed Dora's request to a staff member, but no re-match occurred.

By May, 1992, an additional eight learners had discontinued participation, making a total over a one-year period of 21 leavers (including one of the two Hispanic males.) Of the 8 who left after October, 1991, all but two were women and 5 were long term learners. Two of the eight, both women, were successful learners who moved on to a GED preparation program. One woman became seriously ill and had to leave.

Except for failures to rematch, and toting up the successful terminations and discounting some that appeared to be unavoidable, our general conclusion is that NLC was successful in retaining its long term students. It is not possible without valid comparative data [which does not exist] to ascertain whether or not NLC is more successful in retaining students than similar programs utilizing volunteers in a one-on-one instructional mode. However, we can say that NLC, like most tutor-based literacy programs, is far more successful in retaining low-literate adults than the majority of programs that employ a whole-class instructional format [see, for example, Darkenwald, 1975.]

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Chapter Four

OUTCOMES & IMPACT

The findings and interpretations presented in the first three chapters, including the case studies, were framed by the five research questions enumerated at the start of Chapter One. The report has thus far brought together a substantial amount of evidence and analysis in response to several of these questions, especially the first and most important question of how NLC has changed the lives of the long-term learners. We addressed this question not by presenting a list and frequency count of achievements or new capabilities, but by employing case studies to concretize and contextualize the complexities of attaining and putting to use new knowledge and new skills. In presenting the case studies, moreover, we illustrated how early family and schooling experiences -- the acquisition of certain values, the consequences of school failure -- exerted positive and negative influences on assuming and enacting the role of literacy learner. Likewise, in response to the question of why learners continue their participation or decide to leave the program, it soon became clear that a direct, decontextualized analysis of "reasons for dropping out" would not suffice. Instead, it was necessary to stress continuity and context, to consider not only the learners' but also the tutors' perspectives, to examine programmatic factors, and to return again to the concept of stigma.

In this chapter our primary concerns are to extend and fill gaps in responding to the initial research questions, for example, the matter of effects on learners' children, and to respond to the final question concerned with outcome assessment. We begin by stating our conclusions about NLC's effectiveness in promoting the acquisition and application of literacy skills and in retaining its adult literacy learners.

Outcomes of Literacy Learning

As noted in Chapter One and elsewhere in this report, we did not rely only on self-reports to determine progress in learning to read and change in learners' lives resulting from the application of newly acquired literacy skills. In every case we were able to cross-check learner self-reports with independent sources of information, including the tutor questionnaires and tutor logs. We are therefore confident in our conclusion that all, that is, 100%, of the long term learners made marked progress in acquiring or enhancing basic literacy skills and likewise that the lives of all changed significantly for the better as a result of applying newly gained literacy skills in one or more domains of everyday life. The extent of application of improved literacy skills depended primarily on the nature and number of social roles enacted by each learner. Thus, learners with multiple roles, such as worker, parent, spouse, and church-member, demonstrated a wider range of application of literacy skills that did those with

more limited role repertoires. The new learners, even those who left after a few weeks, also demonstrated at least some improvement in literacy skills, but, not surprisingly, little or no application of these skills in everyday life.

Retention

Chapter Three contains a detailed discussion and analysis of student retention, including statistics on successful terminations, stopouts, and true dropouts. Of the 20 long term learners, eight left NLC within the one-year period May, 1991 to May, 1992. Of these eight, two were successful terminations (women who went on to GED prep programs) and one became seriously ill. Thus, the net retention rate for learners in the program more that one year was 75% (20/5). Among the new learners, those in the program less than a year, 10 had left by May, 1992. Of these 10, one left immediately after pre-testing and never met with a tutor and two met with their tutors only twice after the pre-testing. To count these three as dropouts makes little sense, especially since government-funded ABE programs define enrolled students as those who have received 12 or more hours of instruction. For the new group, then, the net retention rate was 71% (20/7).

NLC's retention rate is impressive when compared with a national norm for ABE programs ranging from 50% [Development Associates,

1980] to 80% [Darkenwald, 1986, p. 20.]. A much stricter standard of comparison is the retention rate of adult literacy programs validated as effective by the U.S. Department of Education's Joint Dissemination Review Panel. Validation by JDRP was extremely competitive and required "convincing evidence of program effectiveness" [Darkenwald, 1986, p. 18]. The highest retention rate among adult literacy programs validated by JDRP was 78% [Darkenwald, 1986, p. 20]. We feel confident in concluding that NLC has been remarkably successful in retaining its adult students -- despite the TABE-testing disruption that we believe led several learners to discontinue attendance.

Outcome Assessment & Testing

The last of the five research questions is restated below.

> "Are there any indications that the reading assessment/ analysis instruments used internally by the NLC, or the standardized **Tests of Adult Basic Education** used by most other reading programs, correlate well with the learners' tangible reading abilities in their daily lives?"

We can promptly set aside that part of the question that refers

to internal assessment/analysis instruments. Miscue analysis was emphasized in the Reading Naturally training, but of course it is not an instrument but a process of error identification and interpretation integral to the effective teaching of reading. The RN, as well as many LVA tutors, typically employed miscue analysis without consciously equating this formative assessment technique with "evaluation of learning." Only very rarely did tutors refer to miscue analysis in their session summary logs or in interviews and only six Reading Miscue Inventory sheets were found in student files. In the absence of systematic, detailed, and cumulative reports of miscue analyses, there is no way that a determination can be made about how well such assessments correlate with progress in learning to read, much less with the application of reading skills in learners' everyday lives. Although systematic reports of miscue analysis could serve many useful purposes, such process assessments are ill-suited for predicting reading test scores or any other measure of instructional outcomes.

The other internal assessment instrument was, in fact, a test called READ published by LVA (Colvin & Root, 1987). READ stands for "Reading Evaluation-Adult Diagnosis. A Test for Assessing Adult Student Reading Needs and Progress." READ is an informal (non-normed) three-part test designed to assess sight vocabulary, word analysis skills, and comprehension/listening skills. Although supposed to be used to determine the starting point for

reading instruction, in practice most tutors ignored the test. The READ test is better suited for needs diagnosis than assessing instructional outcomes.

The Tests of Adult Basic Education (TABE)

Among adult literacy educators, the TABE is often described as a "warmed-over version of the CAT" [California Achievement Tests]. The TABE is a group-administered, paper and pencil achievement test with adult norms equated to those of children and scores almost universally reported in grade equivalents. If the reader wonders what such scores mean, if anything, the publisher has a candid answer.

> "Grade equivalents (GEs) are intended to indicate achievement levels related to typical educational structures -- elementary and secondary schools. These scores do not have comparable meaning in nongraded programs, particularly programs that focus on the education and training of adults. Nevertheless, grade equivalents are commonly understood reference points for adult learners and teachers and can facilitate organization of instructional groups and selection of appropriate education materials." [CTB/McGraw-Hill, 1987, p. 6.]

This is a curious statement, for the publishers appear to damn their own test with a dollop of faint praise. In any event, the TABE is indeed widely used in adult literacy programs and thus we had no choice but to have the reading subtests (vocabulary and comprehension) administered.

Administration of TABE

The testing plan was simple. All 40 learners were to be pretested in June, 1991, and posttested in February, 1992, an interval of approximately 9 months. Carrying through the plan was not at all simple, partly because of multiple sites and student absences, but mainly because of "passive resistance" from the learners. Resistance was especially acute during the posttest period. For most learners the prospect of taking the TABE again was at best unsettling and at worst terrifying. This was true even though the test administrator was the familiar and well-liked African-American woman who worked at NLC and also served as our research assistant. Despite herculean efforts, such as picking up students in her own car and even testing a few in their homes, 19 could not be posttested. Of these 19, seven could not be reached, two were untestable because they did not know the alphabet, and two had been hospitalized. The eight remaining were highly apprehensive and passively resistant, as these excerpts from the test administration report testify:

"She gave three commitments but never showed for any."

"He's very apprehensive, two-time no-show."

"She does not want to participate in the study."

"She was a no-show two times."

"He never gave me any actual commitments. He kept putting the test date off until a later date. Very apprehensive."

TABE Testing Results

Despite all our efforts, we ended up with only six learners who had taken both the pretest and the posttest. Another 23 had taken the pretest only. No inferential statistical analyses could be conducted with an N of 6, but even if we had ten times that number we doubt that an analysis of co-variance would show any significant gains. The main reason, put plainly, is that the TABE is invalid for truly low-level learners. This conclusion is strongly supported by other studies of low-literate adults, such as Fingeret's and Danin's 1991 evaluation of LVA's New York City adult literacy program [**"They Really Put a Hurtin' On my Brain": Learning in Literacy Volunteers of New York City.**]

Fingeret and Danin were able to secure TABE reading pre- and posttest data for 114 adult literacy students, 54 of whom had received more than 200 hours of instruction. Of particular interest here is that the average grade level pretest score for

their 114 students was 1.52 [p. 203]. The NLC mean score for an N of 29 was 2.40. However, 28.9% of their sample were assigned a pre-test score of zero, whereas we followed the TABE norm book by assigning 1.6 in place of zero. Thus, the mean TABE GE pre-test scores for the NLC and LVA-NYC groups were reasonably comparable.

Despite the fact that the LVA-NYC posttest mean was 2.4 (at NLC it was 5.2, N=6, with an outlier at 10.4), Fingeret and Danin reported that their analysis of co-variance revealed "no statistically significant effects on differences in grade level gains between the pre- and post-test scores based on length of time in the program, grade level at entry into the program or the relationship between the length of time in the program and entry grade level score" [1991, p. 205].

For statistical reasons related to lack of variance in GE scores, an ANCOVA using pre- and posttest raw scores would have been preferable and might have resulted in some small but statistically significant findings. But this is only a technical carp, for 83% of the LVA-NYC sample, **and exactly the same percentage at NLC**, scored below 3.0 at entry (p. 206). Not only is there little variance in such a distribution of scores, but to even discuss them is psychometrically meaningless, a fact the publisher comes close to conceding in the following statement.

"The SEM (standard error of measurement) should be taken into

account when test scores are being interpreted. The SEM varies from test to test; it also varies according to where an examinee's score falls within the range of a specific test. If a score is near the floor or ceiling of the range of performance measured by a given test, the corresponding SEM will be much larger than it would have been if the score had been near the middle of the range. The smaller the SEM, the more accurate the test score" [CTB/McGraw-Hill, 1987, p. 7].

As noted in Chapter 1, Wes Darby's pretest TABE grade equivalent (GE) score was 1.6. This score is at the bottom of the range for the lowest level (E for "easy") of the TABE vocabulary and comprehension subtests. Thus the standard error of measurement for Wes Darby's score is huge. Just how huge is clear from the **TABE Norms Book** [CTB McGraw-Hill, 1987, p. 42]. His raw scores on the vocabulary and comprehension subtests were 6 and 7, respectively. Going to the GE conversion table, we find that the vocabulary score equates to 1.4 and the comprehension score to 1.8 for a total score of 1.6. But we also find that even if Wes had had raw scores of zero he still would have been assigned a GE score of 1.6. So, 1.6 equates to a score of zero. Had Wes answered 10 questions correctly on the two subtests, his GE score would have only been 2.2 (with a standard error encompassing zero). Sally James also "earned" a GE of 1.6, as did Bill Doulton. Bessie Bates fared a bit better, with a pretest GE of 2.5.

Can we conclude, therefore, that despite all the evidence to the contrary, including direct observation, three of the four case study learners could not read and the fourth could read about as well as the average child in the fifth month of second grade? Clearly not. Thus it follows that the TABE scores for these NLC learners are invalid. They tell us nothing except that these adults are limited readers, which we knew in the first place.

For the handful of more proficient readers enrolled at NLC the TABE results, as would be expected, make more sense. The two with the highest scores (post-test GE's of 10.4 and 9.3), both women, have since gone on to GED preparation programs. Moreover, even though NLC is a learner-centered program with no curriculum in the traditional top-down sense, five of the six pre/post learners made plausible-seeming gains [total GE's pre/post of 4.0 & 4.6; 2.1 & 3.2; 2.0 & 2.4; 9.3 & 10.4; 2.6 & 3.4].

Since we have not seen such data reported previously, it merits noting that in every case both the pre-test and the post-test vocabulary scores were lower than the corresponding comprehension scores. Such a context-contingent discrepancy would be expected for a low-literate adult population, but it may also point to a fundamental reason why TABE scores are so out of line with demonstrated reading proficiency.

For GED prep programs that offer academic instruction geared to

passing the GED test, the TABE and similar standardized reading tests have some utility, especially for predicting readiness to take the GED examination. However, for NLC, LVA-NYC, and similar learner-centered programs that serve mainly low-literate populations, the TABE is worse than useless. Forcing low-literate adults to take this sort of test is tantamount to cruel and unusual punishment. We do not mean this as a wisecrack. We saw the pain and humiliation in the learners' faces, the trembling and perspiration. Not happy about the TABE to begin with, we wanted to call a halt and substitute a short, individually-administered reading test, but were unable to do so. Tellingly, perhaps, of the 10 dropouts who were new learners, 8 left within six weeks of the pre-testing in June, 1991. We cannot be sure, but it seems unlikely that the correlation is mere coincidence.

Alternative Modes of Assessment

Assessment has, or should have, two main purposes. The first and most fundamental is inseparable from teaching, namely, the evaluation and diagnosis of learning. The second is accountability: the public and the organizations that support adult literacy education rightly demand evidence of accomplishment. In schools, standardized tests serve these purposes to some extent, but in literacy education programs they serve only the latter in a manner now widely acknowledged as a

charade pending the development of practicable and valid alternatives.

It would serve no useful purpose to review here the more promising alternative approaches to assessment in adult literacy education. Fingeret and Danin [1991] and Lytle, et al [1989], among others, have already done so in considerable detail. We agree with the view that the assessment process should stress "learner reading and writing accomplishments and capabilities over time in all literacy-related life activities" [Lytle, et al, 1989, pp. 63-64] and that standard-format learning portfolios should play a key role in adult literacy assessment systems.

Impact on Learners' Children

At the start of the study we had ambitious plans for assessing the impact of parental participation in NLC on the school success of their elementary-aged children. The fourth research question reflects those ambitions.

"Are there any demonstrable second-generation effects on the children of learners in the NLC program for more than one year? Is there concrete evidence that the children of long-term learners perform better in school and in reading since children's fathers or mothers began attending the NLC program?

Our plans for interviewing teachers and the children themselves and for analyzing report cards and teacher-ratings were based on projections of approximately 12 long term learners with children living at home and attending grades 1 to 6. We had even prepared written parental consent forms before discovering that only four of our remaining 1991 long term learners had school-aged children living with them in Newark. Obviously, with a parental N of 4, it was impossible to obtain any convincing evidence of the presence or absence of second generation effects.

Nevertheless, from learner and tutor interviews we were able to ascertain that all four of these long term learners, who before entry to NLC could not read and were too "shy" or "afraid" to talk with school personnel or go to parent-teacher conferences, had totally reversed their formerly disengaged behavior. Wes Darby is a typical case (see pages 9-11). A less typical case is Chuck Minton, a 33 year-old Afro-American man born and raised in Newark.

Chuck Minton is not one of the four mentioned above because his only child, Rebecca, a second-grader, lives with her mother. However, Chuck sees Rebecca regularly on the weekends and takes an active role in guiding her education. Chuck's experiences are of particular interest because of the extraordinary progress he has made in learning to read. When he came to NLC some two years

ago, he was totally illiterate. Now he reads not only his mail, the newspapers, and word-related material in his newly-gained job, but novels and poetry as well.

In November of 1991, in the learner follow-up interview, this was his response to the question, "What changes and differences have occurred in your life over the past six months because of your learning to read?"

"My daughter told me that she heard I couldn't read. I told her to choose a book and I will read it to her. She chose a book that I was able to read and I read it to her. It made me feel really good and it also encouraged me." (Chuck went on to describe positive changes in his work situation due to improved reading skills and concluded with this statement: "I'm a lot more confident. By reading different books it helped me to build ideals, not so much in writing, but in thought.") Chuck Minton is not only learning to read at NLC, but reading to learn -- beginning, in fact, to acquire a liberal education.

Mr. Minton, as his tutor verifies ("Chuck is using his reading skills to advance on his job and helps his seven year-old daughter with her schoolwork"), regularly reads to Rebecca and helps her with homework. Moreover, when he discovered that Rebecca was "daydreaming in school," he took it on himself to call and make an appointment to discuss the problem with her

teacher.

We could continue with many more illustrations of how NLC fathers and mothers with school-aged children -- even children "at a distance" -- have been prompted and enabled by their experiences as adult literacy learners to take an active role in helping their children succeed in school. The simple fact that these parents are role models for their school-going children cannot help but have a salutary influence. Although we cannot directly demonstrate that parental involvement in NLC positively affects children's school success, what we know about child development and the deleterious effects of lack of parental involvement, leads to a presumption of positive influence that is supported by prior research [Darkenwald & Valentine, 1984].

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CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

There is little doubt in our minds that the Newark Literacy Campaign is effective in reaching, teaching, and retaining what the first author has described as the hardest-to-reach literacy-deficient adults -- those who suffer the multiple handicaps of race discrimination, poverty, and low or non-existent reading and writing skills [Darkenwald & Larson, 1980]. Although it was founded only a few years ago, NLC has greatly expanded its adult literacy program and has become an important and integral component in Newark's interconnected network of human service agencies.

Two other things about NLC seem to us particularly noteworthy. The first is an organizational climate characterized by openness, warmth, and caring, as well as by dedication and industry. The second, which no careful observer could miss, is how much NLC has been able to accomplish under conditions of severe resource deprivation. NLC's financial means are not only small in relation to the scope of its current services and the magnitude of need, but insecure as well. We did not expect, with only two full-time professional staff, supplemented by two occasional-time tutor trainers, that NLC could accomplish so much, so well.

In our opinion, the Newark Literacy Campaign is now in a position

to move ahead vigorously with major programmatic initiatives that our findings indicate could greatly extend its contribution to ameliorating Newark's illiteracy problem while at the same time serving as a model program and center for research, development, and experimentation in community-based adult literacy education. Most of the following recommendations therefore presume enhanced fiscal resources: without greater support from corporations, foundations, and government authorities under the provisions of the National Literacy Act of 1991, there is little more NLC can do to extend its reach and effectiveness.

Recommendations

1. Like Fingeret and Danin [1991], whose report we did not see until our own research was completed, we identified tutor turnover as the source of many of the most severe problems adversely affecting student learning and persistence. Although we were able to identify several reasons for tutor turnover, a high priority for future research is to gain a fuller understanding of the role of the volunteer literacy tutor, including analyses of interactions with learners and professional staff and of the problems, challenges, and satisfactions inherent in this role. Research along these lines is a prerequisite for the development of much-needed tutor training materials to enhance effectiveness in the role and mitigate dissatisfaction and turnover.

Our first recommendations closely parallels Fingeret's and

Danin's [1991, p. v].

Recommendation 1: NLC should develop an integrated system for tutor support to decrease turnover and promote instructional effectiveness. The system must address the need for regular provision of follow-up training as well as expert support and supervision. In addition, provision is needed to help students deal effectively with problems arising from tutor turnover.

2. The implementation of Recommendation 1 requires a professional educator with special expertise in tutor training and supervision, and in materials and methods for adult literacy education.

Recommendation 2: NLC should create and fill a new professional postition of Learning Coordinator for the purpose of implementing Recommendation 1.

3. As this study has shown, NLC's population of low-literate, poor adults come with special needs and problems that often interfere with their ability to progress to their full potential or even maintain attendance. These problems are especially acute

for female heads-of-households. Moreover, we have shown that

insecurity and anxiety in the learner role, a direct result of the internalization of the stigma of illiteracy, leads to a fragile and tentative commitment to persist in learning, especially when a tutor leaves.

Recommendation 3: NLC should institute ongoing provision for professional counseling and referral services.

4. As noted above, our findings indicate that women with children labor under multiple handicaps that interfere greatly with their ability to attend regularly and to maintain participation over extended periods of time. We believe that women's burdens are so great a problem that male tutors can seldom grasp or deal with them. As a rule, only women tutors can fully empathize with, or "take the role of the other," in relationships with women learners. Moreover, women students are unlikely to share their most grave and intimate problems with male teachers. Gender matching seems the only solution.

Recommendation 4: Whenever possible, women learners should be matched with women tutors.

5. Several NLC learners, eager and able to progress faster toward their goals, felt frustrated by being limited to only two hours

of instruction per week. "More hours, more days" is a very real

need to which NLC and other literacy programs can and should respond. Hence, our fifth recommendation.

Recommenation 5: NLC should make provision for those learners who wish to accelerate progress toward their goals by attending more frequently. To do so will require operating a least one weekend site and experimenting with small group tutorials designed to address this need.

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APPENDICES

Appendix A: Data Collection & Analysis

Appendix B: Learner Genogram/Social Network Interview Guide

Appendix C: Illustrative Genogram

Appendix D: 1991 Tutor Questionnaire

Appendix E: Learner Follow-Up Interview Guide

Appendix F: Leaver Interview Guide

Appendix G: Site Observation/Interview Guide

Appendix H: 1990 Learner Interview Guide

Appendix I: 1990 Tutor Questionnaire

Appendix A: Data Collection & Analysis

Data collection and analysis was guided by an approach to naturalistic or quasi-ethnographic research known as "grounded theory" and by the assumptions and methods of genogram analysis. The first author had never heard of genogram analysis and the second was only slightly familiar with grounded theory methodology. Happily, our strengths were complementary.

Grounded theory methods came into widespread use in the 1970's following the publication of **The Discovery of Grounded Theory** by Glaser and Strauss in 1967. The first large-scale study in the field of education to employ this methodology was conducted by the first author and his colleagues at Columbia University between 1969 and 1973 and later published as **Last Gamble on Education: Dynamics of Adult Basic Education** (Mezirow, Darkenwald, & Knox, 1975). Interested readers can find a thorough discussion of the application of this methodology in the introductory chapter of **Last Gamble**. For the purposes of this report, the following brief interpretation should suffice.

"Essentially, grounded theory is an inductive approach to research that focuses on social interaction and relies heavily on data from interviews and observations to build theory grounded in the data rather than to test theory or simply describe empirical phenomena. It is closely related to the sociological and anthropological fieldwork traditions exemplified by such familiar

works as Street Corner Society (Whyte, 1941) and Tally's Corner (Liebow, 1967). Perhaps the major distinction between grounded theory and traditional fieldwork is that grounded theory is less concerned with detailed description...than with generalized explanations of the social phenomena under study. To facilitate the development of theoretical generalizations, grounded theory researchers rely heavily on comparative analysis, whereas many social scientists who use field methods confine their research to the intensive study of a single group, tribe, organization, or other social collectivity" [Darkenwald, 1980, p. 64].

Genogram analysis, a technique widely used in family and marriage therapy, has in recent years been adapted for more general use in social science research. Readers interested in learning more about genograms and the analysis of genogram data can consult Appendices B and C. A succinct explantion of the genogram is provided by McGoldrick and Gerson in **Genograms in Family Assessment** [1985, p. 1].

"A genogram is a format for drawing a family tree that records information about family members and their relationships over at least three generations. Genograms display family information graphically in a way that provides a quick gestalt of complex family patterns and a rich source of hypotheses about how a clinical problem may be connected to the family context and the evolution of both problems and context over time."

Chapter One describes in detail the study's data sources, the means employed to obtain data (interview guides, questionnaires, and so forth), and when, between May, 1990 and May, 1992, the data from each source were collected. Missing from Chapter One, however, is an account of the process by which the data were analyzed.

We adhered to the generally accepted methodological principle that data analysis should proceed concurrently with data collection. This practice is essential in grounded theory research in order to identify tentative conceptual categories and empirical generalizations, such as those related to the stigma-fear syndrome or tutor turnover, and then test their validity by securing further confirmatory or non-confirmatory evidence. We employed two means to accomplish this end. The first was the periodic staff meeting (attended for a time by Dr. Sam Murrell, who conducted nearly half of the initial learner interviews but left in August, 1991 for a professorship) at which the author-researchers reviewed emerging findings and modified data collection activities as needed to pursue the paths that seemed most promising. The second approach we employed was the individually-prepared analytical summary or theoretical memo, which, after extended discussion, served to progressively focus, refocus, and narrow the course of data collection and analysis.

From February to mid-May, 1992, after most of the data had been collected, the final stage of analysis was undertaken by the

first author and his doctoral research students at Rutgers University. Written summaries of each case, drawing on all of the data sources at our disposal, were prepared by the doctoral students. At each weekly three-hour meeting, four to six cases formed the basis for analysis sessions aimed at identifying and elaborating conceptual categories, hypotheses, and empirical generalizations. After the fourth meeting we began preparing and sharing theoretical memos based on the ongoing case analyses. By the end of the term, the group had reached consensus on the key concepts and themes that formed the basis for this written report. Although the research questions posed in the original project proposal served initially as a broad organizing framework, by the end of the semester the analysis had gone well beyond the initial focus on identifying and explaining outcomes.

Ford Foundation Literacy Assessment Program (Newark, N.J.)

Participant Genogram/Social Network Interview Framework
(all interviews will be confidential with the research team)

This initial interview will consist of open ended questions. Each interview will be structured for one hour. This will provide information for follow-up interviews.

1. Name
2. Address
3. sex, age, race,
4. phone#
5. Tutor:

*6. Describe your family: using a genogram, record characteristics, demographics, family patterns etc. (see genogram description)

The following questions will be addressed and answers recorded during and after using the genogram format and narrative:

7. How was your schooling?
8. How did you feel about school?
9. How was reading and school viewed in your family?
10. Describe your family background regarding employment (i.e. parents, siblings etc.)?
11. How was written material dealt with? (ask family members when interviewed).
12. What was your employment background prior to your involvement with the program?
13. How did you deal with reading and writing?
14. What is your current family life situation?
15. Current Employment?
16. Relationship with children (record school information etc)?
17. How do you involve yourself with the community?
18. How do you deal with situations when reading is needed? (driving etc.)
19. How did you come to enroll in this program?
20. How did you feel when you first started?

The following are additional questions for learners who have been in the program more than one year:

21. How are you different regarding your involvement with the program?
22. How has your involvement changed your relationship with friends?
23. What social patterns did you have prior and after your involvement?
24. Has improving your reading made a difference in your political involvement? (i.e. voting etc.)
25. Who decided what you should learn?
26. How did you learn?
27. What were the program dynamics? (organization, climate, respect, communications etc.)
28. How did your participation effect your thoughts about yourself? (self esteem, image)
29. Did you receive any counseling in the program?
30. What needs did you have regarding learning to read?
31. What tasks did you perceive as being needed? (ask input from tutor and friends etc.)
32. Did you ever feel that your dignity was not respected?
33. Can you read better now? How?
34. Did you learn by doing? How?
35. Where you self directed? How?
36. What approaches to leaning did you use?
37. How was decisions made about your progress and needs?
38. How sensitive were people and materials regarding your culture?
39. Describe some stories and occurances that deal with your learning to read? What differences occurred in your life?
40. How did this affect your knowledge of life?
41. How were you assessed?
42. How did you see progress?
43. How did your friends, family, and employer view you as a result of your experience here?

*from Genograms in Family Assessment by Monica McGoldrick and Randy Gerson (New York:Norton,1985)

A genogram is a format for drawing a family tree that records information about family members and their relationships over at least three generations (see attached genogram symbols).

Genograms.....provide a quick gestalt of complex family patterns and a rich source of hypotheses about...family context...

Genograms...map the family structure clearly and...note and update the family 'picture' as it emerges.

Genograms make it easier...to keep in mind family members, patterns and events...

The information on a genogram is best understood from a systemic and ecological perspective.

The genogram helps....see the 'larger picture,' both currently and historically...

we include...the entire list of characters- nuclear and extended family members as well as significant non-family members who have lived with or played a major role in the family's life- and a summary of the present family situation, including relevant events and problems.

The index person...may be viewed in the context of various subsystems, such as siblings, triangles, complementary and symmetrically reciprocal relationships, or in relation to the broader meta systems such as community, social institutions (schools, courts, etc.), and the broader sociocultural context.

Some patterns that may appear relevant to our study:

Redundancy of patterns

personality characteristics

relational compatibility problems

interconnected events

family style i.e. close, distant

complementary and reciprocal behaviors of different family members and its consequences

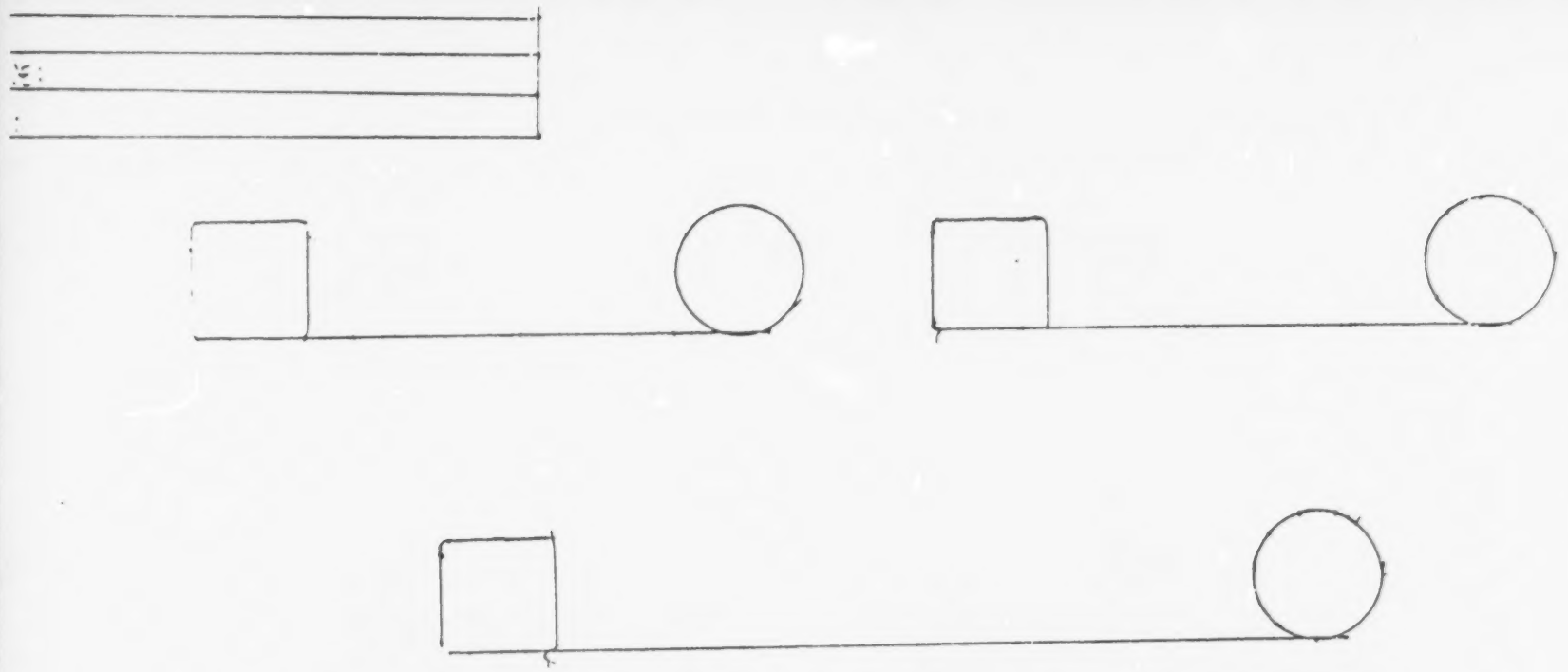
It would be best to read pages 1-38 for constructing genograms etc. (zeroxed chapters 1 and 2) and the selected chapters from Ethnicity and Family Therapy (edited by Monica McGolrick et. al.)

Following attachments are the Tutor Interview form, Genogram format/symbols and a Permission Form which will allow us to interview other people in the learners social/business/school network.

** all interviews with the learners will be confidential with the research team. There will be no interviews with employers, school personnel or any other individuals without the signed permission of the learners.

*** interviews with other family members, employers and school personnel will be designed from the initial interviews with the learners to assess the congruency of the perceptions of both learners and others.

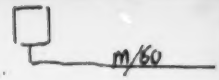
**** all interviews will be framed to answer the objectives and questions in the *Evaluation Proposal* to the Ford Foundation (see pages 5-9 of the proposal).



O FEMALE
□ MALE
m. YEAR MARRIED
27-47 BIRTH-DATE
X DEATH
□/○ SEPARATED
□—○ DIVORCED
□..○ LIVING TOGETHER
□^^○ CONFLICT
□≡○ VERY CLOSE
○---□ DISTANT
○-|-|-○ CUT OFF

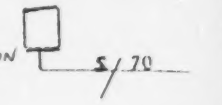
MALE ☐ FEMALE ○

MARRIAGE (GIVE YEAR); (HUSBAND ON LEFT, WIFE ON RIGHT)
M = MARRIAGE / NUMBER = YEAR OF MARRIAGE



INDEX PERSON (IP) OR SYMPTOMATIC CLIENT ◻ ◎

MARITAL SEPARATION (GIVE YEAR)
S = SEPARATION / NUMBER = YEAR OF SEPARATION
(/) = separation

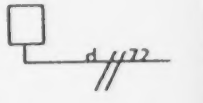


Year of birth 43-75 Year of death

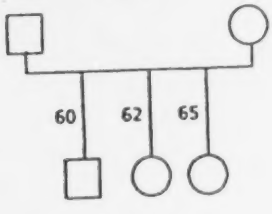
Death = X

Divorce, (give year):

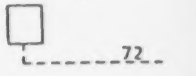
d = divorce
number = year of divorce
(//) = divorce



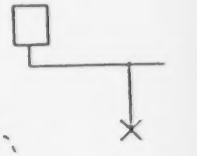
Children: list in birth order, beginning with the oldest on the left:
number = year of birth



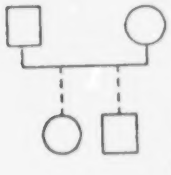
Living together relationship or liaison:

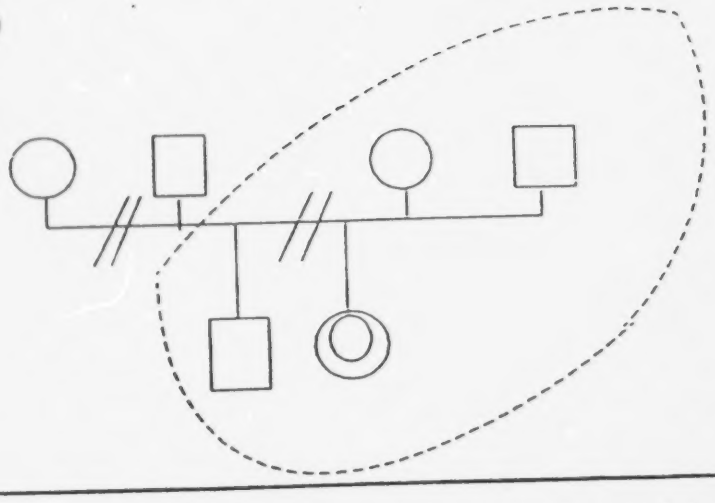


Induced abortion:



Adopted or foster children:





Members of IP household, (circle them with dotted line):

Where changes in custody have occurred, note:

Drug Problem: ○ Heroin

Alcohol Problem: ☐ Alcohol

In addition to the Index Person with a drug problem, indicate any other family mem with a drug and/or alcohol problem as shown at left. Note primary substance of ab next to the person's symbol.

Family Interaction Patterns: (Nature of Relationships)

Very Close:

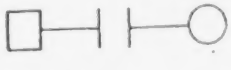
Distant:

Fused & Conflictual:

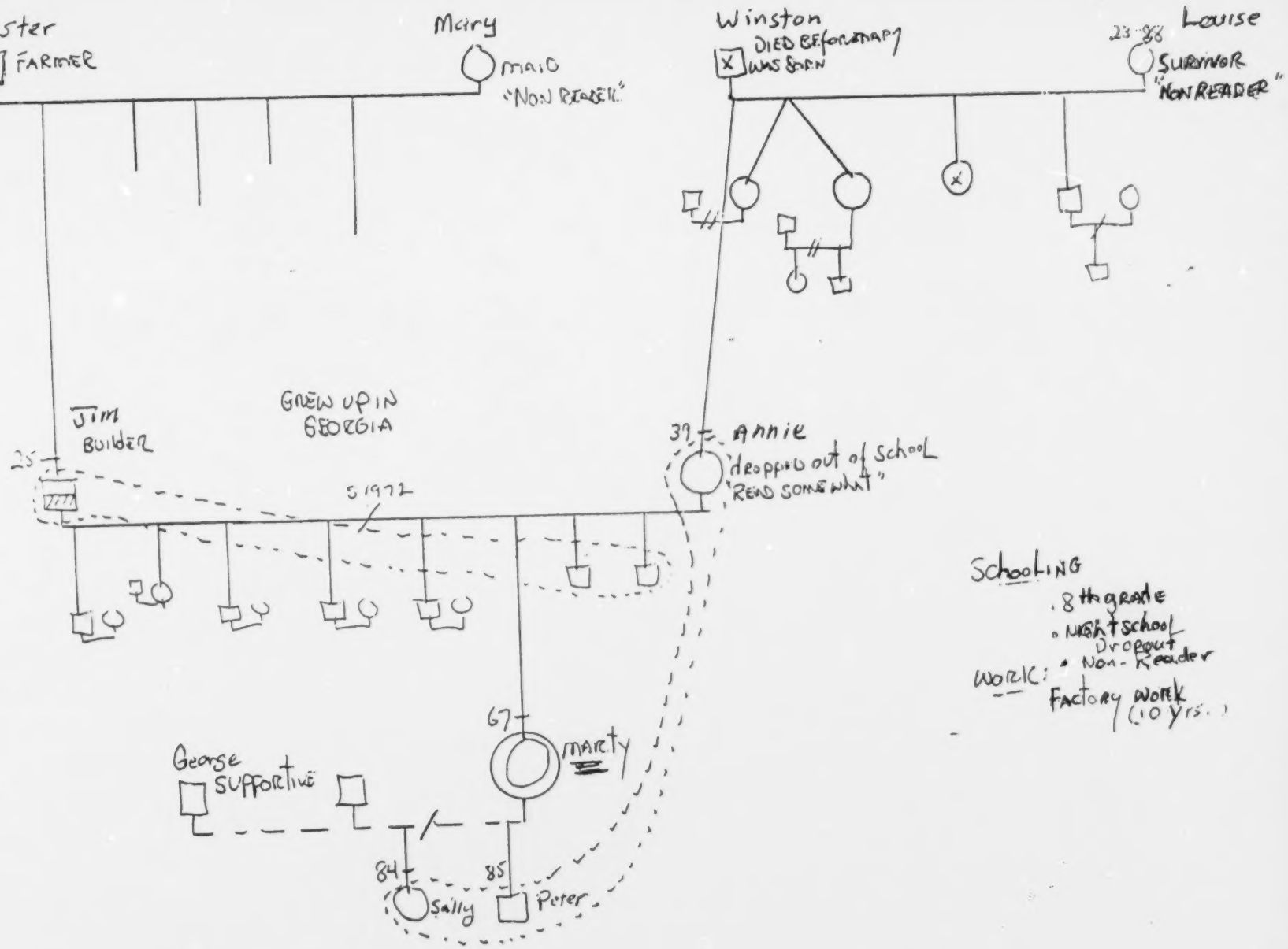
(a bond of mutually satisfying and rewarding on-going conflict)

Conflictual:

Estranged/cut off:



Appendix C: Illustrative Genogram



Schooling
- 8th grade
- night school
- Dropout
- Non-Reader

Work:
- Factory work (10 yrs.)

NEWARK LITERACY CAMPAIGN, INC.
c/o Newark Public Library
Box 630, Newark, NJ 07101

Ford Foundation Study

Dear Tutor:

This questionnaire is a very important component of the Ford Foundation Assessment Project. Please complete and return it as soon as possible. We promise that your answers will be held in the strictest confidence. Completed questionnaires will be seen only by the research team and will be discarded after analysis.

Name_____ Learner's Name_____

1. How long have you tutored your current learner? _____

2. In what method were you trained? (Circle all that apply)
Reading Naturally L.V.A. Laubach

2a. Which method are you now using? _____

3. Do you feel your training was sufficient? Yes No

3a. If No, why not?

4. What was the primary reason you decided to become a tutor?

5. Please describe your current learner's reading skills when you first began tutoring him/her.

6. At that time, what methods and materials did you employ?

7. What led you to choose the methods and materials described above?

8. Please describe your learner's reading skills at the present time.

9. Has your learner used improved reading skills to do something he or she could not do before, such as read mail, a menu, or newspaper, help children with schoolwork, or something related to work or personal development? If yes, please describe.

10. What sorts of things, if there are any, do you see as negatively affecting your learner's ability to improve his or her reading skills?

12. Please describe the nature of the personal relationship between you and your learner.

Thank You For Your Time and Help

Appendix E: Learner Follow-Up Interview Guide

Date:

1). Since your last interview, how would you describe your progress in this program?

2). What changes and differences have occurred in your life over the past six months because of your learning to read?

a) Family/Children

b) Job

c) Personal (i.e. self-esteem)

3). What personal goals do you have for yourself?

4a). How do you feel about the program?

_____

_____

4b). How do you feel about your tutor?

_____

_____

_____

5). General comments:

_____

_____

_____

6). Do you have any children in Elementary School?

Child's Name: _____

School: _____

Grade: _____

Teacher's Name: _____

7). How are your children doing in school?

_____

_____

_____

8). How have you been able to help them since starting the program (especially over last 6 months)?

APPENDIX F

NLC LEAVER INTERVIEW GUIDE

Ford Foundation Project
November 1, 1991

Name_____ Interviewer_____

Tel. #_____ Date_____

Start:

Hello. This is Angelique Barclay from the Newark Literacy Campaign. I just want to ask, very briefly, a couple of questions about why you left the program. Is this a good time to call? Do you have 2 or 3 minutes? (IF NOT, arrange call-back time).

Questions:

1. **Why did you decide not to continue with your tutor at the Newark Literacy Campaign?**

2. **How much did the Newark Literacy Campaign help you to improve your reading ability?**

3. **Have your improved reading skills made any difference in your life? How? [Probe if necessary]**

Newark Literacy Campaign Site Oservation/Interview

Observer_____ Site_____

Date_____ How long has the site operated_____

Observational Description:

Climate (environment, atmosphere [physical&interpersonal])

Organization (social/learning context)

Instruction (procedures)

Activities

Appendix H

1990 Learner Interview Guide

Q 1. What was your main reason for wanting to learn to read better?

1a. So far, how much has the program helped you to improve your reading?

Would you say: 1 A Lot 2 Some 3 A Little 4 Not at All

IF ANSWER IS "A LITTLE" OR "NOT AT ALL", ASK: Why hasn't the program helped?

Q 2. Has attending this reading program made you feel better or worse about yourself?

1 Better 2 Worse

2a. Why or in what ways?

Q 3. Before starting in the program, did someone read things for you? 1 Yes 2 No

3a. IF YES, who was that?

3b. What kinds of things did he/she read for you?

3c. Are you reading any of these things yourself now?

Q 4. Have you used your reading skills to do something you couldn't do before or to do it better? 1 Yes 2 No

4a. IF YES, COULD YOU GIVE ME AN EXAMPLE OR TWO?

4b. IF NO , WHAT IS THE REASON WHY?

4c. What are you doing now in your daily life that you've never done before?

Q. 5. Do you have a child, or children, in elementary school living with you at home? 1 Yes 2 No

IF "NO" SKIP TO QUESTION 6

5a. IF YES, what grade or grades are they (or he/she) in?
LIST EACH CHILD BY NAME AND GRADE

5b. FOR EACH CHILD, ASK THE FOLLOWING QUESTIONS:

1. Since starting in this reading program do you help (_____) with schoolwork more than you used to? 1 Yes 2 No
NAME OF CHILD

REPEAT IF MORE THAN ONE CHILD

2. Do your read books to (_____) since you started with your tutor? 1 Yes 2 No

REPEAT IF MORE THAN ONE CHILD

3. Do you take (_____) to the library more often?

REPEAT IF MORE THAN ONE CHILD

4. Has (_____) attitude toward school changed since you started coming to this program? 1 Yes 2 No

IF YES, IN WHAT WAY?
(REPEAT IF MORE THAN ONE CHILD)

5. Have their been any changes in(_____) school grades? 1 Yes 2 No

IF YES, IN WHAT SUBJECTS? WHY?

(REPEAT IF MORE THAN ONE CHILD)

Q 6. When you first began in the program, were you: 1 Employed? 2 Unemployed and Not Looking for Work? 3 Unemployed and Looking for work?

Q 7. What is you job situation now? 1 Employed 2 Unemployed and Not Looking for Work
3 Unemployed and Looking for Work?

Q 8. Has coming to the program helped you in any way regarding work? 1 Yes 2 No
8a IF YES, IN WHAT WAYS? (probes: better job, job evaluation, raise, pass test)

8b IF NO, WHY NOT?

Q 9. Adults sometimes have problems when they start going to a reading program. Have you had any of these problems yourself?

READ EACH PROBLEM

1. Trouble attending because of job or family responsibilities 1 Yes 2 No
2. Not getting along too well with a tutor . . . . . 1 Yes 2 No
3. Not enough help or attention from a tutor . . . . . 1 Yes 2 No
4. Trouble learning to read better than when you started . . . . 1 Yes 2 No

Q 10. What do you feel is the SINGLE most important benefit, if any, that you have gained from coming to this reading program?

(IF "FEEL BETTER ABOUT SELF," PROBE FURTHER)

WE NEED TO KNOW MORE ABOUT OUR LEARNERS' BACKGROUNDS OR CHARACTERISTICS. PLEASE HELP BY ANSWERING THE FOLLOWING QUESTIONS.

1. How old are you? _____

2. What do you do for a living?_____

3. SEX: OBSERVE 1 Male 2 Female

4. What was the last grade of school that you attended? CIRCLE BELOW

Grade Number: 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10 11 12

5. ETHNICITY. OBSERVE. IF UNSURE ASK: Do you identify yourself as:

1 Caucasion (white) 2 Afro-American (Black) 3 Hispanic 4 Other_____

APPENDIX I

Newark Literacy Campaign Questionaire for Tutors (May, 1990)

Date_____ Your site location_____ Current Status:
(please circle) Active
Inactive

Please circle: Your sex Male Female
Where you work Newark Other
Where you live Newark Other

How long have you been tutoring? _____ What is your age? _____

Please circle your educational background:

1. high school 2. some college 3. college degree

4. graduate degree 5. other_____

The following questions are designed to collect information that will be used to evaluate and improve the tutorial program:

1. How did you find out about the Newark Literacy Campaign?

2. What was the primary reason you decided to become a tutor?

3. By what method were you trained? (circle all that apply)

1. Reading Naturally 2. L.V.A. 3. Laubach

Which method are you now using? _____

Why?

4. Do you feel that your training was sufficient? yes no

If you answered no, why was the training insufficient?

What suggestions do you have for making the tutorial sessions more effective?

5. What programatic needs do you see as existing? (please circle)

1. more resources
2. more instructional time
3. counseling
4. other (please explain)

6. How has your tutorial experience personally affected you?

7. What kind of progress have you seen in your learner's reading?

8. Has the learner you are working with used improved reading skills to do something he/she could not do so before?

   If yes, please give an example or two?
   If no, please explain the reason why?

9. In what ways has the coordinator of your site been helpful to you and what ways could he/she be more helpful?

10. Please make any other comments that you feel may be helpful?